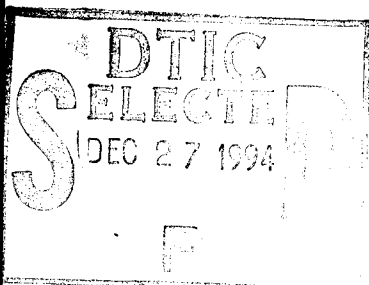


Mobile Defense: Extending the Doctrinal Continuum

**A Monograph
by
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Infantry**



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This monograph examines the mobile defense, past and present, in order to clearly define its concept. Over the years doctrine has traditionally defined the range of possible defenses as existing on a continuum of defensive operations. This continuum has been variously defined at its ends by "mobile" and "static" poles. These poles have usually been objectified respectively as the mobile and area defenses. This study maintains that the mobile defense is defined too narrowly, and is not logically opposed to the area defense. The result is an abbreviated doctrinal continuum which fails to account for the full range of defensive operations. The study of the mobile defense proceeds by conducting an historical review, beginning with its entry into the Army lexicon following World War II, and continuing to the present, with the 1993 version of FM 100-5, Operations. The results of these reviews are then analyzed using as criteria the four characteristics of the defense from FM 100-5, along with risk management and relative mobility. The study concludes that the mobile defense as currently defined in Army doctrine is actually a particular and favorable type of the general pattern of the mobile defense, not the general pattern itself. The general pattern of the mobile defense should account for those defenses fought with minimal forces when the enemy has not only the advantages of "home" terrain, but also force ratios greater than 3:1. The particular form of the general pattern may or may not include a controlled penetration as implied by current doctrine, but in its simplest form may merely be a flexible defense designed to react to enemy penetrations wherever they occur. The monograph ends by offering a new definition of the mobile defense and a proposed extension of the defensive of the continuum graphic which incorporates that new definition.

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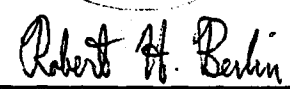
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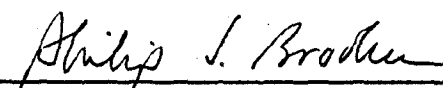
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ABSTRACT

MOBILE DEFENSE: EXTENDING THE DOCTRINAL CONTINUUM.

By MAJ G. L. Walters, USA 48 pages.

This monograph examines the mobile defense, past and present, in order to clearly define its concept. Over the years doctrine has traditionally defined the range of possible defenses as existing on a continuum of defensive operations. This continuum has been variously defined at its ends by "mobile" and "static" poles. These poles have usually been objectified respectively as the mobile and area defenses. This study maintains that the premise that the concept of the mobile defense is defined too narrowly, and is not logically opposed to the area defense. The result is an abbreviated doctrinal continuum which fails to account for the full range of defensive operations.

The study of the mobile defense proceeds by conducting an historical review, beginning with its entry into the Army lexicon following World War II, and continuing to the present, with the 1993 version of FM 100-5, Operations. Also reviewed are the Center for Army Tactics "Mobile Defense White Paper," (Draft, October 1993), and a review of Warfighter Exercise Final Exercise Reviews, from the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP)(January 1992 to August 1993). The results of these reviews are then analyzed using as criteria the four characteristics of the defense from FM 100-5, along with risk management and relative mobility.

The study concludes that the mobile defense as currently defined in Army doctrine is actually a particular and favorable type of the general pattern of the mobile defense, not the general pattern itself. The general pattern of the mobile defense should account for those defenses fought with minimal forces when the enemy has not only the advantages of "home" terrain, but also force ratios greater than 3:1. The particular form of the general pattern may or may not include a controlled penetration as implied by current doctrine, but in its simplest form may merely be a flexible defense designed to react to enemy penetrations wherever they occur. The monograph ends by offering a new definition of the mobile defense and a proposed extension of the defensive of the continuum graphic which incorporates that new definition.

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1. Introduction

FM 100-5, Operations (1993), recognizes two formal patterns of defensive operations: the area defense and the mobile defense. The area defense is that defense built

around a static framework provided by defensive positions, seeking to destroy enemy forces with interlocking fires. Commanders also employ local counterattacks against enemy units penetrating between defensive positions.¹

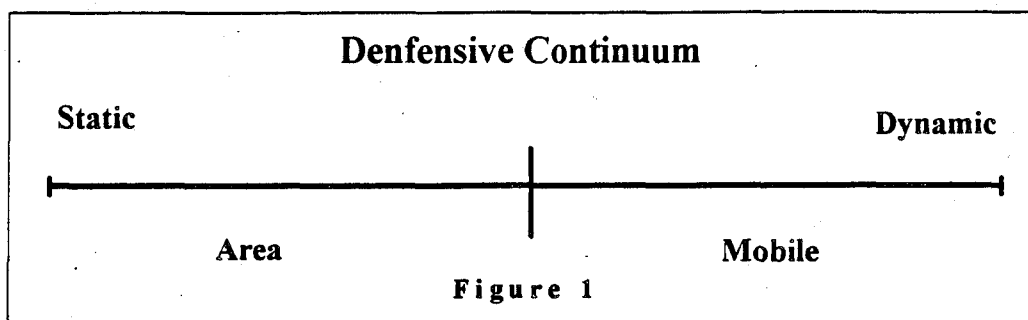
While the mobile defense is that defense which

orients on the destruction of the enemy force by employing a combination of fire and maneuver, offense, defense, and delay to defeat his attack. The minimum force possible is committed to pure defense; maximum combat power is placed in a striking force that catches the enemy as it attempting to overcome that part of the force dedicated to the defense.²

These two patterns taken individually or in varying combinations theoretically describe all the ways a commander can defend.

The sum total of the mobile and area defensive patterns and their combinations represent a defensive continuum. This continuum is sometimes mistakenly represented as static at one end and dynamic at the other (Figure 1). The area defense on this simplistic continuum is at the static end of the spectrum, incorporating mutually supporting defensive positions designed to retain terrain, and embodying what is meant when one says "defend." At the dynamic end of the continuum is the mobile defense, a "high risk" operation bent on force destruction by counterattack. The area defense is generally simple and well understood. The mobile defense is enigmatic and often the cause of contention.

The mobile defense is the subject of this monograph. The impetus for this monograph comes from Prairie Warrior '93, the capstone exercise for the Command and General Staff Officers Course (CGSOC). It was during this



exercise that General Cevazos (Ret.) stated that in his experience as senior controller for thirty-seven Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) rotations, every commander, including student commanders, had conducted at least one operation that they had termed a mobile defense. He further asserted that to date no commander had ever actually conducted a mobile defense.³

Prompted by General Cevazos' comments, CGSOC students and tactics instructors engaged the general in several mobile defense discussions during the week-long exercise. At the heart of the matter, as already stated, was that the mobile defense is often misunderstood; the discussion groups from Prairie Warrior generally concluded that the mobile defense involved more than a simple continuum of defensive types polarized by static and dynamic operations.

Emerging from the discussion was that the differences between the mobile and area defenses went beyond merely the way the defense was to be conducted, but also involved, first, the means (especially forces) available for the conduct of the defense, and second, the desired defensive operations endstate itself. Some suggested that it was more an attitude than a technique or pattern. While most of the officers involved in these discussions agreed there was a problem, the problem's solution required more time than was remaining in either the exercise or course.

Preliminary research further indicated that much of the confusion surrounding the mobile defense rested in its definition's evolution from the time it

entered the Army's lexicon following World War II. This evolution was the result of the Army's grappling with its defensive doctrine through the principal events of Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War, and the through the concepts of active defense and Airland Battle. The rationale for these changes is now largely lost, if it ever existed. Rather, the mobile defense underwent a gradual and evolutionary change, not always understood, and not always for the better. While the current doctrine is clear about what constitutes a mobile defense, vestiges of the older definitions are present and unresolved in the current debate.

The purpose of this monograph is to clarify, to define, the mobile defense, by identifying its definitive characteristics. Secondly, how do those characteristics accord with FM 100-5's definition, when should the commander employ the mobile defense, and if the above continuum is mistaken, how so, and what should it look like?

The method, beginning in Section 2, examines the evolution of the mobile defense in its historic doctrinal detail, deriving from this examination its changing as well as unchanging characteristics. This examination focuses on FM 100-5, Operations, the Army's capstone doctrinal manual and the Command and General Staff College's Military Review, the Army's premier professional journal for the tactical level of war.⁴

The third section, then, picks up where the second ends, addressing current doctrine and views of the mobile defense, including how it has been conducted in recent practice. This entails a consideration of the 1993 FM 100-5, Operations manual, the Center for Army Tactics' "Mobile Defense White Paper" (October 1993), and a review of the mobile defense as employed in BCTP rotations over the past two years.

In the fourth section the mobile defense is analyzed using as criteria the four characteristics of the defense found in FM 100-5--security, disruption, mass and concentration, and flexibility--along with the additional criteria of relative mobility, and risk.⁵ The fifth and final section defines the mobile defense, and presents a refined defensive continuum graphic which integrates the new definition.

2. Evolution of the Mobile Defense

This section traces the mobile defense through Army doctrine from its beginnings following World War II to the present. This trace is significant because the "mobile defense" has been and is poorly defined, evidenced by the very existence of the debate surrounding its meaning. Central to this debate are the changes it has undergone in the past fifty years. While remaining the same in name, it has changed characteristics and emphases along with rest of U.S. defensive doctrine with each new issue of FM 100-5. Tracing these changes and noting the differences from one period of doctrine to the next is instrumental to understanding why the mobile defense is explained in various ways by various people, and why its current understanding is muddled.

Highlights of this evolution are that the mobile defense emerged from the German experience in World War II as a highly flexible defense used principally against a superior foe. With time and U.S. military success it took on an increasing degree of offensiveness at the expense of flexibility, until it gave way to the active defense aimed very particularly at the Soviet threat in Europe. The active defense came to be regarded as brittle, and unable to account for the depth of the modern battlefield; it was resultantly replaced in the next FM 100-5 by Airland Battle. Finally, within the framework of the deep operations attendant to Airland Battle, the mobile defense reentered Army doctrine, though significantly different

than its original concept. Tracing these changes, it bears saying again, is important to our present understanding. The trace follows.

Written in the midst of the late Allied offensive successes of World War II, the 1944 version of FM 100-5 addressed only one pattern of defense:

Our defensive doctrine contemplates the organization of a battle position to be held at all costs, and the use of covering forces to delay and disorganize the advance of the enemy and to deceive him as to the true location of the battle position.⁶

This manual goes on to describe "a number of mutually supporting defense areas...each organized for all around defense."⁷ The defensive description, while containing elements not found in the current FM 100-5, was nevertheless a classic description of the area defense. There was little mention of even the component pieces of what we know as the mobile defense. Reserve operations, the first place one might look to find the germ of a mobile defense, were sparsely addressed:

"They are held mobile, prepared to participate in battle in accordance with the plan of maneuver of the superior commander." Closest to a mobile defense concept was that armored units were "not normally employed to hold defensive positions," but to rather "operate similarly to horse cavalry except that larger reserves are withheld initially for the purpose of counterattack."⁸

Looking elsewhere for the formative paragraphs of what might later become the mobile defense, one finds, for example, that if a counterattack were required to restore the integrity of the above battle position defense, that local counterattacks were the principal means by which the enemy attack was to be defeated. And if the penetration exceeded the local commander's capabilities,

the higher commander must decide whether to counterattack with reserves at his disposal to restore the battle position, to continue battle on the battle position, or to withdraw to a prepared position in [the] rear.... Whenever practicable, the counterattack is launched against the flanks of the hostile salient. Advance planning for such an operation is essential.⁹

The Army's doctrine at the close of World War II, then, contained an area defense, said little about a mobile defense, and generally appeared satisfied with the adequacy of its defensive doctrine, due largely to that little occurred during World War II to refute current defensive ideas. Kevin Soutor, in a thesis entitled, "Mobile Defense: The German Influence on American Operational Defense Doctrine, 1944-1954," writes:

Success [in the Ardennes] bred complacency from the defensive standpoint, for the Army had been on the offensive throughout World War II. Defensive doctrine did not require exhaustive revamping after 1944.¹⁰

As the title of Soutor's thesis suggests, he contends it was the German influence, as uncovered by the Army's Department of Foreign Military Studies, which caused the Army to introduce the mobile defense into its doctrine.¹¹

Whatever the source of the influence, and Soutor's conclusion of the German's influence is compelling, the beginnings of the mobile defense were clearly evident in the next version of FM 100-5 (1949), even if not in name. Although a battle position defense "to be held at all costs"¹² remained central to the sections devoted to defense, Section II of the manual, nonetheless, introduced the "Defense of a Wide Front."¹³ This section would evolve into the mobile defense in the 1954 version of FM 100-5.

Central features of the 1949 "defense of a wide front," were (Numbers refer to paragraph numbers in the 1949 FM 100-5):

601. Where the frontage assigned a unit is many times greater than that considered normal, the defense will take the form of a screening action....

602. Seldom will it be desirable to commit all or even a bulk of a force to positions along the main line of resistance.

603. The sectors assigned units on the main line of resistance under such circumstances are usually so large as to preclude the organization of a zone of mutually supporting defense areas across the entire front.

605. The maximum number of troops are held mobile in each unit.¹⁴

The principal comparative difference between the defense of a wide front and the modern mobile defense was that in the "defense of a wide front" in the 1949 FM 100-5, the commander was *driven* to a sparse forward defense *due to insufficient forces*; he had a front assigned many times larger than normal.¹⁵ He created a large reserve in order to remain flexible, which enabled him to contain or defeat any penetration in his sector. Conversely, the modern commander usually *chooses a thin defense* in part of his sector to allow a "controlled" penetration which exposes an enemy flank to an overwhelming counterattack. Whatever these differences, and they will be consequential, the 1949 doctrine writers felt the need for more than just an area defensive concept. Other military writers shared their concern.

In May 1951, an important article in the evolution of the mobile defense appeared in Military Review, written by Major Robert J. Hoffman, entitled "Mobile Defense."¹⁶ Hoffman's article captured well the issues of the day regarding the mobile defense. He was especially focused on its derivation from the western European scenario (Fulda Gap), and the need for an imaginative defensive concept. Available Allied *forces would be inadequate* for the traditional positional (area) defense.

Hoffman's opening premise was that a favorable "next war" scenario would occur in three phases: (1) a strategic defense followed by, (2) a stabilization of all fronts, and then, (3) an offensive to obtain a decision. The mobile defense was integral to the first two phases. According to Hoffman Allied forces had to prepare for action of two types during Phase I: "retrograde movements, and a mobile or wide-front defense. This [was] dictated by the inferior numbers of the 'forces in being' of the Western Allies."¹⁷

Hoffman was not alone in his defensive views during this period. Similar casting about was being done other than at the Command and General Staff

College where Hoffman was an instructor. A position paper from the Commandant of the Infantry School to the Commandant of CGSC, dated 1 September 1954, began,

A need exists for a different concept of defense in the infantry. Virtually all analyses of future warfare agree on two points. First, that the United States and its allies will be forced, in any future war, on the defensive. Secondly, an attempt to man any projected defensive line across Europe, using the position-type defense concept, will be impossible because of the large number of troops required for such an undertaking. Sufficient troops are not available now, and probably will not initially be available in the future for a position defense. Wider sectors need to be defended with the troops available.¹⁸

What the Infantry School proposed was the mobile defense.

Hoffman went on to explain exactly what he meant by *types* of defense, by way of getting at the relatively novel concept of a mobile defense. As he wrote this article there *were* generally regarded to be two types of defense, seemingly little different than as currently described in Army doctrine. In his words,

A position defense comprises a series of mutually supporting defensive strongpoints or areas. These defense areas are located so that there can be a mutual exchange of supporting fires between them....

Whenever the frontage to be covered is so great that effective mutual support between positions cannot be obtained while still retaining an adequate reserve, a mobile-type defense must be adopted. This is frequently referred to as a wide-front defense, or as "*defensive-offensive*" action (italics mine).¹⁹

Hoffman wrote of a position and a mobile defense. His position defense was essentially equivalent to the modern area defense. But Hoffman's mobile defense, while clearly a forerunner of the modern mobile defense, was simply not the same. One of the chief conclusions of this monograph is that Hoffman's definition was not only different than the modern definition, but better. (It was "Hoffman's" definition only because he gave the rationale for the mobile defense in his Military Review article. His definition was consonant with the FM 100-5 of his time.) A closer examination of Hoffman's definition follows.

Hoffman's mobile defense was designed to address the very critical and possible situation confronted by a friendly commander when he had to prepare a defense, and his forces were inadequate for an area defense.²⁰ (The Fulda Gap scenario that Hoffman had in mind still holds in our power projection era, though perhaps on a smaller scale, and probably somewhere other than Europe.) An area defense that relied on interlocked, mutually supporting positions was force intensive. The idea emerging from Hoffman's article was the question: how would a commander defend when he could not man the entire line, and risk became a necessity? Hoffman's answer, distilled and in general terms, was that one developed a flexible defense which kept the enemy's "vote" well in mind, and prepared the best possible defense for a less than best situation.

This best possible defense was the mobile defense. Designing the mobile defense involved identifying a limited number of critical pieces of terrain, strongpointing them, and then holding in reserve enough force to deal with the inevitable enemy penetration. The penetration was inevitable because one of Hoffman's assumptions was that the commander chose the mobile defense because he had insufficient forces for a viable area defense. Since a wholly mutually supporting defense was not possible, the commander had to sparsely and carefully choose the forward ground for defense for two reasons. First, that ground would serve the basis for retaining the defense's integrity by limiting the size and area of the penetration while providing the base for the counterattack that followed.

Second, only by severely limiting the size of the forward defense could the commander form a reserve large enough to provide real flexibility over the broad front.²¹ Again, the decision to conduct a mobile defense was

driven by the exigencies of the situation, and not simply by the commander's intent, for example, *to create an opportunity to destroy the enemy force*.

The reader may have surmised by now that a chief difference between Hoffman's mobile defense and that of the current doctrine is one of design. The defense described in Hoffman's article accepted that there were occasions when the enemy's options were so strong that the best he could do was build a defense that was essentially reactive. This was not to say that the commander could not shape the battlefield by, for example, separating echelons, denying certain avenues of approach, or through deceiving the enemy commander.

What Hoffman accepted, and what the original mobile defense allowed for, was that the general defensive situation might exist that could only be described as unfavorable. What the defending commander needed was a defensive methodology that accounted for the enemy's initiative. In other words, it was conceivable that the general situation was so favorable to the enemy that it made more sense to prepare a flexible tactical response, than to worry about semantics such as "surrendering the initiative."

In 1951 the commander employing a mobile defense, *employed a defense focused on flexibility*. He was prepared to concede, even if briefly, that he might have to react to the enemy's penetration. He also understood that he might not successfully shape that penetration. According to Hoffman:

More counterattack plans normally must be prepared in a mobile defense than in a position defense, since the width of the sector and the lack of mutually supporting fires between defensive areas provide more opportunities for an enemy penetration. Plans must be prepared in the greatest possible detail to counter any penetrations: yet, flexibility must be retained in all plans so that adjustments may be made to fit the situation as it develops.²²

Continuing the evolutionary trace, the mobile defense was formally introduced by name into the 1954 version of FM 100-5. Originating as a debate throughout the Army over the "broad front defense," the 1954 FM 100-5 reflected not only an evolution of the broad front defense from the 1949 version, but with minor revisions, included it under the title of *mobile defense*, as the second of two basic types of defense.²³ In the mobile defense,

the bulk of the force is held as a mobile striking force with the remainder manning the forward defensive position. The forward defensive position may consist of islands of resistance, strong points, or observation posts, or any combination thereof. These islands of resistance and/or strong points may or may not be mutually supporting. The striking force serves as a counterattacking force to destroy the enemy at the most favorable tactical locations.²⁴

The 1962 FM 100-5 changed the above definition little:

The mobile defense is the method of defense in which minimum forces are deployed forward to warn of impending attack, canalize the attacking forces into less favorable terrain, and impede, harass, and disorganize them. The bulk of the defending force is employed in vigorous offensive action to destroy the enemy at a decisive time and place. In general the forward forces employ the principles of the delaying action, while the remainder of the force utilizes the principles of offensive combat.²⁵

The mobile defense had firmly taken on most of the aspects of the modern version with the above two entries. (The 1962 manual also replaced "position" defense with "area" defense.) The mobile defense had been born from the "defense of a broad front," with language from the 1949 FM 100-5 still readily apparent: "In non-nuclear operations the mobile defense is applicable to highly mobile warfare and situations where *broad frontages must be covered by minimum forces* (italics mine)."²⁶

One aspect of the new mobile defense, and the principal point demonstrated by this historical review, was the unresolved problem of a tension formed in its evolving definition between "flexibility" and "initiative." Though originally

designed to provide flexibility, the 1962 definition of the mobile defense started toward the current FM 100-5's view (of placing initiative over flexibility) by addressing more directly the friendly commander's initiative when it referred to "canaliz[ing] the attacking forces into less favorable terrain."²⁷ The language indicated a slightly less uncertain situation than did Hoffman's version, but at least recognized the enemy might have the initiative when the 1962 version continued, "In both environments [nuclear and non-nuclear], the mobile defense offers an opportunity to destroy the attacking force and regain the initiative."²⁸ But what exactly is the "initiative-flexibility" problem?

The original mobile defense concept was predicated on the notion that the friendly commander would have to fight outnumbered beyond the standard 3:1 force ratio. He would do this by preparing a defense (the mobile defense) that relied little on forward positioned forces, as they would be difficult to reposition after identifying the enemy's main effort. The commander using the mobile defense would instead position the largest part of his forces in a reserve position, which could then be flexed along interior lines to meet the enemy's penetration wherever it came.²⁹

The tension between flexibility and initiative emerged as the doctrine evolved, and the aspect of planning multiple counterattacks was supplanted by the striking force concept and the "shaped penetration." In short, the tension asked, should the commander prepare multiple counterattacks against various possible penetrations, or plan a striking force counterattack designed against a planned penetration? The former was flexible, while the latter focused on wresting away the initiative. The problem with the former was that it sacrificed initiative in its waiting for a determination of the enemy's main effort. The problem with the latter was that it sacrificed flexibility by not recognizing that there was wide range of

defensive situations in which the penetration could not be shaped with any significant degree of certainty. To require the defender to form a *striking force and a reserve* overlooked that the mobile defense was often employed due to insufficient forces for an area defense. If these forces were not available for an area defense, they probably were not available to form a forward defense, a striking force, and a reserve in the mobile defense. This "initiative-flexibility" problem is one that recurs throughout the mobile defense discussion, and is analyzed in Section 3.

During this period (1954-1962), the Command and General Staff College's Military Review devoted more than a dozen articles to the mobile defense. One of these, published in the same month as the new 1954 FM 100-5, was by another CGSC instructor, Lieutenant Colonel Clarence DeReus, entitled "The Defense of Tomorrow?" DeReus points out that the mobile defense was not necessarily accepted by all Army professionals, even though it had made it into the Army's capstone doctrinal manual. He alluded to the dispute in the opening line of his article: "One of the more controversial operations visualized in military operations today is the planning for, and conduct of, the mobile defense." Later in the opening paragraph he indicated that "little confidence is expressed in this form of defense by many officers, since for years the military has emphasized in training the ideal form of position defense."³⁰

Nevertheless, Lieutenant Colonel DeReus' article was a fervent apology for the mobile defense. His theme was large, looking ahead to the next world war, in which U.S. forces would be outnumbered, and which the opponent would open with nuclear weapons. While he described the mobile defense essentially as did Hoffman and the 1954 FM 100-5, he broadened its scope by saying that not only if a commander has

a willingness...to accept penetrations of considerable depth by the enemy for the purpose of counterattacking with a strong, highly mobile

reserve, and destroying the enemy, [has the] mobile defense... been adopted.

But the mobile defense has also been adopted if the commander is

ever alert to the possibilities of striking the enemy while he is in a disadvantageous position forward of friendly positions, even though his over-all mission remains one of defense.³¹

What DeReus' article highlighted was that the complex and fluid mobile defense could be viewed in various ways. Salient considerations offered by DeReus were (1) that the mobile defense was conducted when forces were not available to conduct the more resource-intensive position (area) defense, (2) that the lack of concentrated forward troop positions rendered enemy weapons of mass destruction less effective, and (3) that the mobile defense was a mental attitude bent on destroying enemy forces when and where they were disadvantaged.³²

If DeReus's ideas about the mobile defense being a "mental attitude" were seemingly peculiar, then Captain Clinton Granger's ideas on the defense presented in Military Review in 1962 must have seemed downright odd.³³

Granger found in the transition from the 1954 to 1962 versions of the operations manual an unstated acceptance on the part of the doctrine writers to view the defense as something other than the "undesirable alternative to the offensive--to be used only when the combat power for offensive action was not locally available."³⁴ Granger argued that the lines between the offense and defense had been blurred by the increased mobility of the modern battlefield.³⁵ This was particularly evidenced by the introduction of the mobile defense.³⁶ He pointed out while it might be logical to refer to the offense and defense for analytical purposes, those "individual elements" did not represent well what happened on the battlefield. War was more complex than that.

Rather, Granger offered that,

Under the probable mobile conditions of the future battlefield, retention of positions--at least for limited periods, as in a delay action, or

the operations of a fixing force in the mobile defense--will be tasks for some elements of the command, while other elements will be attacking. Therefore, to base a definition of "defense" or "offense" on the tasks of units within the command, as in current doctrine, is to ignore the likely nature of warfare in the future.³⁷

Recognizing that large commands execute many elements of offense and defense at a given time, Granger ultimately argued that perhaps more useful terms were "actions to the rear of or forward of the line of contact".³⁸ The idea of the offense and defense fluidly combining in future war will probably not be new to the contemporary reader. Recognizing that Granger's approach to those ideas were concurrent with the development of the mobile defense, is perhaps a small step toward comprehending why the mobile defense is misunderstood.

The effect of offense and defense blending together in a single operation, with no well-delineated tactical pause, challenged the clear notion of a separate offense and defense. The offensive nature of the *counterattack* within the mobile defense would cause some to lose sight of its original design as a flexible defensive concept. The focus shifted toward its resource-intensive capabilities to wrest the initiative from the enemy, and away from its resource-scarce ability to defend on a broad front. At the same time that the mobile defense became progressively more offensive oriented, a new defensive concept was emerging very much oriented on the advantages of defense.

With the advent of the 1976 FM 100-5 and before the silt could settle in the mobile defense debate, the *active defense* arrived and muddied the doctrinal waters. The new operations manual combined the concept of high mobility, and the long standing advantage of defense, in order to create a new only-need-one-now defensive concept. It was a distortion. Gone with the new manual were the terms "mobile" and "area" defense, replaced by the "active" defense and its five fundamentals:

- Understand the Enemy
- See the Battlefield
- Concentrate at the Critical Times and Places
- Fight as a Combined Arms Team
- Exploit the Advantages of the Defender

The presence and discussion of each of these fundamentals in the 1976 manual offered little in and of themselves for the active defense's critics to challenge. The fundamentals themselves were sound; there was not one that the modern professional would disagree with. So where was the problem?

According to Colonel Robert E. Wagner, writing for Military Review in August 1980,

The problem, in my opinion, is that these [How to Fight] manuals do not go far enough and they equivocate on key points between different doctrinal and sometimes national schools of thought.³⁹

One does not have to guess at what he meant in this passage; he continued a few lines later,

Otherwise, we run the risk that active defense will be interpreted as a forward deployed, laterally dispersed, static operation without the linchpin of offensive maneuver to make it work.⁴⁰

This is precisely what the defense came to be in the minds of Army officers, and is how we now remember it. Whatever the active defense was, it was open to interpretation according to Colonel Wagner.

One notion of the active defense, and one that Wagner may have deliberately chosen not to address, was that it was a highly scientific (calculating) response to the European scenario, one in which U.S. and allied forces would be both heavily outnumbered and required to defend forward. It was scientific because of its tremendous emphasis on local force ratios and probability of kill (pk)

statistics, based on a precise knowledge of friendly and enemy weapons capabilities.⁴¹

To better understand the active defense, and therefore why the mobile defense disappeared, it might help to examine how the active defense was put together, and how its five fundamentals combined to answer the Soviet threat. This is useful as the Soviets were the impetus for both the mobile and active defenses.

The first two fundamentals of the active defense, as stated above, were to understand the enemy and to see the battlefield. These two requirements in the context of a much larger enemy force, and a forward defense requirement, coupled with the third and fifth fundamentals to add shape to the whole concept of active defense: concentrate at the critical time and place, and take advantage of the defense. The fourth fundamental, fight as a combined arms team, subtly addressed the technical aspect of "servicing" targets.

More descriptively, the idea of the active defense was first to determine the enemy's order of battle and point of attack through a thorough knowledge of his operations and an aggressive and forward looking intelligence gathering system from the tactical to strategic levels (fundamentals 1 and 2). It was critical to know how and where the enemy was coming because the commander would have to shift forces to get the proper force ratios (fundamental 3), both in terms of sheer numbers and in terms of sequentially "servicing" targets, that is, accounting precisely for the enemy's various attack formations, and especially the echelonment of his forces (fundamental 4). Finally, it was important to be set before the enemy arrived to take advantage of camouflaged turret and hull-down positions (fundamental 5).

Once the friendly commander knew where, how many, and in what order, he could (theoretically) quickly shift the right quantity and mix of forces along

interior lines to achieve the minimum 1:3 force ratio locally, and wait in advantaged positions for the enemy attack. "Precision" was the watchword of the active defense. Lacking the proper overall force ratios, and denied the ability to trade space for time, the active defense resorted to a scientific solution for the Warsaw Pact's tremendous numerical superiority.

The *area* defense, with its mutually supporting positions and interlocking fires, was close to what the European defender needed, but it lacked the flexibility for the extreme economies of force that would be required. It did not account for the quick, even dramatic, shifts of forces that the commander would have to precisely time. The active defense required economies on the flanks which simply could not be reconciled with the area defense's definition of "mutually supporting positions."

The mobile defense, on the other hand, with its emphasis on exposing an enemy flank to counterattack, failed to adequately retain the forward terrain (German border), and more importantly, failed to properly regard the fifth fundamental, which was to take advantage of the defense, and which was so important to achieving the proper force ratios, and therefore, success.

Colonel Wagner described the active defense as potentially being interpreted as static, because it was designed to rigidly retain the forward terrain, and because whatever movement took place, ideally occurred before the first bullet was fired. Wagner stated that "the reader will rapidly discern my strong tilt toward the *active* instead of *defense* in the example and discussion."⁴²

The example in his article was a "trap play."⁴³ In this example he used natural terrain advantages coupled with an economy of force operation on one flank. Reinforcing this force initially with combat aviation in order to firmly deny that flank, he thus encouraged the enemy to use the most likely avenue of

approach on the other flank of his sector. He reinforced the enemy's predisposition to go there by defending that area lightly and having that force conduct a delay back to a reinforced blocking position which was then defended. The delay operation allowed a penetration that exposed the enemy regiment's flank which Colonel Wagner's reserve forces counterattacked. This pattern of defense sounded hauntingly familiar. It was a classic description of the modern mobile defense.

Colonel Wagner did indeed emphasize the "active" in active defense, but he used the word descriptively and was not particularly mindful of the active defense concept. While the doctrine writers understood their concept and carefully chose their language in order to make the active defense viable for all occasions, they were not successful. The active defense had replaced the defensive continuum with a very particular kind of defense. The 1976 FM 100-5 did not consider any other type of defense, and "doctrine" had been reduced from being a cog between the full range of theory and all possible tactics, techniques and procedures, to a single, worst-case concept that dealt with the "Fulda Gap" problem.

It was simply too tall a task to reconcile terrain retention with the enemy's overwhelming numbers. The active defense tried to simultaneously and entirely engulf the old defensive continuum, though it was particularly born from and focused on the Fulda Gap scenario. In trying to replace with a single concept what had previously been a defensive continuum, the active defense became a "mobile area defense." This was so because the commander conducted a *timely flex of forces* to achieve the proper ratios in order to conduct a *local area defense* (at the enemy's breakthrough point).⁴⁴ It was a house of cards.

Commanders like Colonel Wagner were frustrated with FM 100-5's lack of clarity. When one rolled up the five fundamentals in the context of the European situation, they made a narrow (European scenario) kind of sense, however

brittle the concept now appears to the modern commander. What could not be reconciled was how to take the all-encompassing term of active defense and apply it to all possible scenarios in all contexts. There was no continuum, no diametrically opposed defensive poles, no ranges of differing defensive operations, no criteria by which to judge and consider all the possible ways to conduct a defense. There was a single concept of defense which had to be molded around the situation at hand, and which still required the European scenario for full explanation. For the moment the exigencies of the Soviet threat drove out the old defensive continuum and with it the mobile defense.

The active defense, then, like the mobile defense, came into being as an attempt to deal with the Soviet threat. The Soviet threat included, not only a large force ratio advantage, but multiply echeloned forces, in which rear echelons could be maneuvered to exploit the successes of forward echelons. Unlike the mobile defense, the active defense was designed to defeat the Soviets' large force superiority without surrendering terrain. While U.S. and allied forces had enough defensive force to emplace mutually supporting positions along the eastern edge of Western Europe, those positions could not sustain themselves against the attacks of multiple Soviet echelons. The Soviets were, as we know, well equipped to throw significant forces through any rupture and wreak havoc in friendly rear areas.

Although the active defense did consider the enemy's echeloned forces in its calculations, it did little to affect those follow-on echelons, making it resultant brittle. Due to a lack of his enemy's interference, the Soviet commander had full latitude to exploit initial successes, or if he preferred, to divert as much or little of his follow-on forces as he pleased to areas less well defended. The active

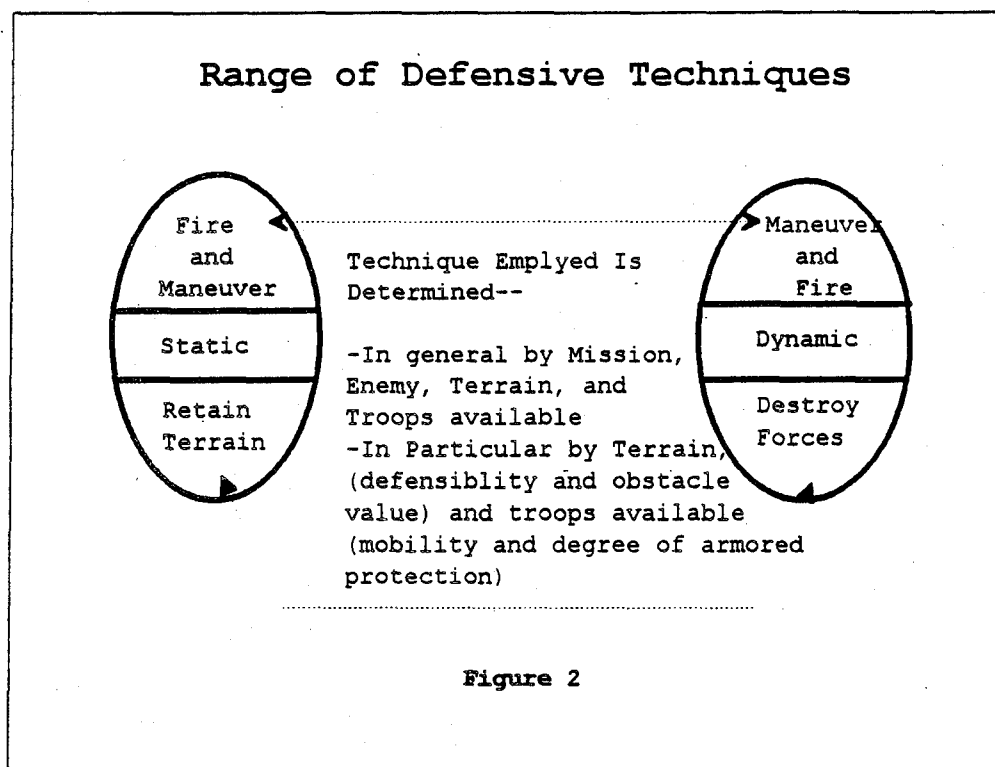
defense's weaknesses were quickly recognized and it gave way in the next version of FM 100-5.

It was the active defense's brittleness, its quick loss of the initiative to the enemy, that the 1982 FM 100-5 addressed with what would come to be known as Airland Battle.⁴⁵ Not much time is needed with this well known concept. Like the active defense, Airland Battle precipitated from the European scenario, but unlike the active defense, it did not require the Fulda Gap to justify its concept.

One can sense the strong relationship between the fundamentals of the active defense and two of the tenets of Airland Battle, synchronization and agility. They were directly related. But it was the other two tenets of Airland Battle--initiative and depth--which drove directly to the heart of the problems not answered by the active defense, and which ultimately affected the role of the mobile defense.

Though the active defense disappeared in the 1982 manual, the area and mobile defenses did not make a full comeback. The authors of the new doctrine opted instead for the more abstract terms "static" and "dynamic," bringing back the essence of the old continuum, but also seemingly wanting to indicate the ease and speed with which defensive operations moved along it. (Figure 2)⁴⁶

There were also more substantive differences. The defenses were called techniques in the 1982 version and were said to "apply to brigades, battalions, and companies."⁴⁷ Furthermore, in the descriptions of the possible defenses, there was little language beyond that in the continuum drawing below which sounded like the mobile defense, though there was some indirect discussion of the need for counterattacks and the need for being prepared to fight on a fluid battlefield. The 1982 version of FM 100-5 occupied a position between the 1968 and 1976 versions regarding the

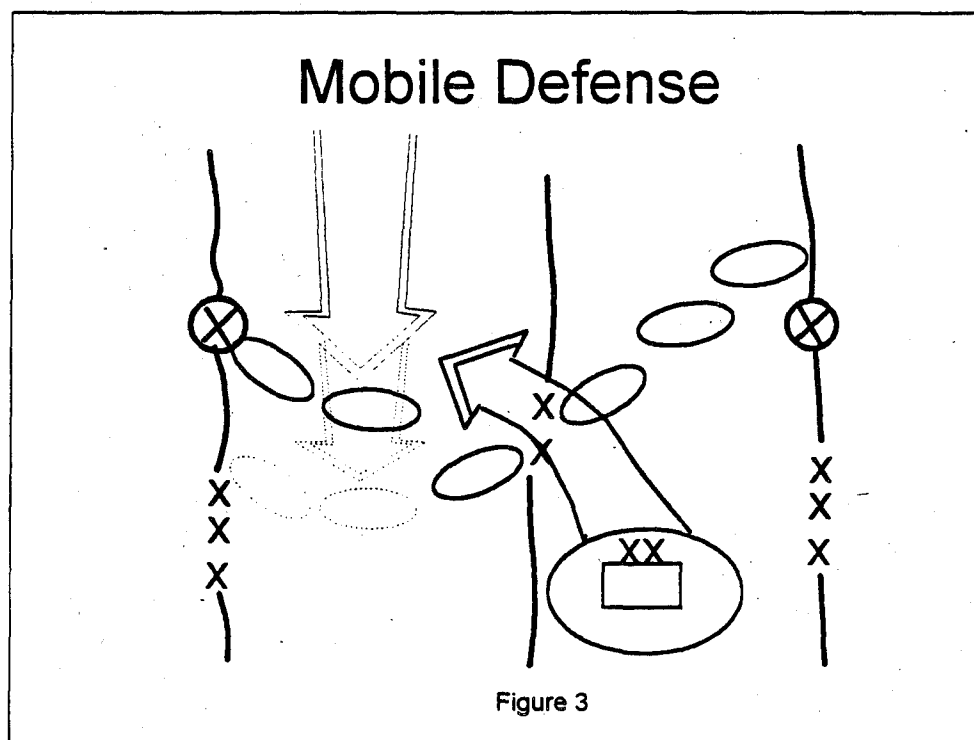


mobile defense. Although progress had been made conceptually concerning how to deal defensively with the ever-increasing depth and mobility of the modern battlefield, the mobile defense itself lagged behind, dwarfed by the Airland Battle concept. Airland Battle emphasized the deep fight and precise timing. The goal was to fight one echelon at a time, preventing the enemy commander from influencing the fight with follow-on forces.

With the 1986 FM 100-5 the mobile and area defenses formally reappear after an eighteen year absence. The mobile defense employed, according to the 1986 version,

a combination of offensive, defensive, and delaying action to defeat the enemy attack. Their exact design varies from case to case and must be described in detail in each instance. Commanders conducting mobile defense deploy relatively small forces forward and use maneuver supported by fire and obstacles to wrest the initiative from the attacker after he has entered the defended area.⁴⁸

The 1986 definition was not far removed from Hoffman's, with the exception of "wrest[ing] the initiative from the attacker." But because of that exception, and that there was no discussion of unplanned or surprise enemy penetrations, the initiative-flexibility tension remained unresolved in the 1986 version. The example in the schematic (Figure 3) was a very favorable version of the mobile defense.⁴⁹ The defense held fast in one portion of the sector while a delay was conducted in another to surrender enough terrain to expose a flank which was then



counterattacked.

With this 1986 example we complete the trace of the mobile defense from its entry into Army doctrine to modern times, and are now ready to continue in the next section with the current view and practice of the mobile defense. To date the mobile defense has been a vacillating concept, ranging from a stopgap measure to buy time, to a decisive force destruction mechanism. The U.S. Army's doctrinal concept of defense had advanced to this time. It had done so principally

through working its way into and out of the active defense, and as measured by its sophisticated responses to the problems associated with battlefield depth, embodied finally in Airland Battle. Nevertheless, that same Army doctrine, under pressure from a huge Soviet ground force, edged further and further from the original mobile defense concept. The defensive continuum compressed over time to account for that range of options available versus the Soviets in Europe. In doing so it severed the "flexible" mobile defensive schemes from the continuum and with them some potentially useful "types" of the mobile defense pattern, especially for a power projection army finding itself heavily outnumbered in the initial stages of a deployment. That vestiges of this earlier "flexible" version informally remain in the mobile defense discussion, attests to its still being controversial and misunderstood.⁵⁰

Section 3. Contemporary Doctrine and Practice of the Mobile Defense

This section brings the mobile defense concept fully up to date, including, but not limited to the strictly doctrinal position. In other words, how is the mobile defense really being used and debated currently? It does this by a brief examination of the Center for Army Tactics'(Draft) "Mobile Defense White Paper" (October 1993), and a look into BCTP Final Exercise Reviews from the past two years.

The mobile defense definition offered by CTAC's "White Paper" was taken verbatim from the 1993 FM 100-5.⁵¹ Salient points from the new Operations manual were addressed in the "White Paper" discussion, with one exception: the mobile defense now required mobility "greater than" the enemy's, rather than "equal to or greater than."⁵² This issue is dealt with below in the subparagraph entitled "Relative Mobility."

The White Paper's Executive Summary began with an explanation of why it was needed. It stated,

Considerable confusion existed with regard to the differences between the area and mobile defenses. This was particularly true in the area defense when any maneuver was conducted in reaction to the enemy.⁵³

Two significant findings ensued from the study group's work:

The first problem is the lack of clarity and insufficient considerations throughout our corps, division, and brigade operations manuals. Several subordinate echelon manuals use nondoctrinal terms or are simply incorrect. The second problem appears to be inadequate instruction concerning the characteristics of the mobile and area defense, and differences between them. The result is many planners in the field cannot discern the difference between the two forms of the defense. They tend to incorrectly categorize any defense with maneuver as a mobile defense.⁵⁴

Why the White Paper limited the confusion to "planners in the field," is not clear, but its central argument was what was important. Ask a group of commanders to explain the mobile defense, and you will receive as many answers as number of commanders you ask.

Following the Executive Summary, the "White Paper" began by examining the essential maneuver Field Manuals which addressed the mobile defense. The "White Paper" found that these manuals were, as already noted, inconsistent, nondoctrinal, and even wrong. This finding seems exactly right; however, this monograph will limit its interest in the publication review to FM 100-5.

The only real objection that the study group had with the current FM 100-5, was with "[characterizing] the striking force as a large, mobile reserve."⁵⁵ The study group objected to calling the striking force a reserve because "success of the mobile defense is dependent on the successful commitment of the striking force," therefore, the reserve was committed.⁵⁶ The notion is simply that the striking force is committed; therefore, it cannot be a reserve. In the CTAC example, which will be considered below, both a striking force and independent,

uncommitted reserve are provided. A fuller discussion of the reserve and striking force follows in the next section under the criterion of "Risk Management."

The study group further recommended that the following sentence be added to the definition of the reserve in FM 101-5-1: "Its primary purpose is to provide flexibility and retain the initiative through offensive action."⁵⁷ Flexibility was the key word here and this issue will also be addressed in the next section under the criterion of "Flexibility."

Under the subheading of "Maneuver," the White Paper stated that one of the general conditions under which a mobile defense was conducted was when the commander "resorted" to it because "friendly forces were insufficient to adequately defend using an area defense."⁵⁸ Interestingly, this is the component of the mobile defense that this paper finds has faded out of the definition. How does this square with the "orientation on force destruction?" The next section will consider the issue of flexibility at length under the criterion of "Flexibility."

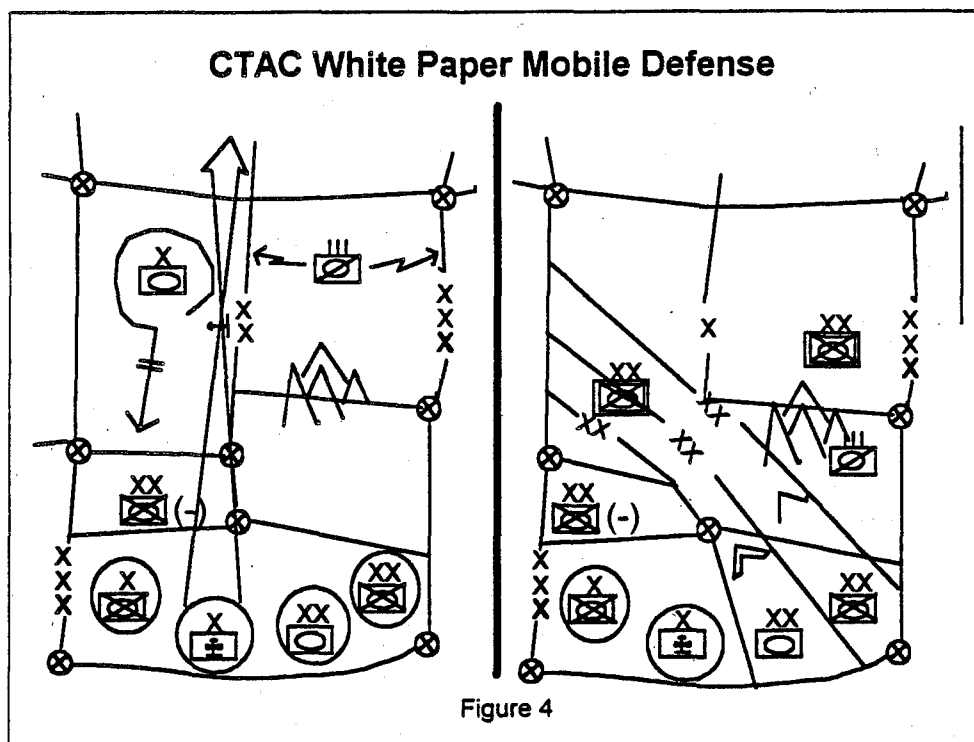
The last point that the White Paper made of interest to this monograph was that,

Accepting risk is a critical aspect in a mobile defense because the defending force must retain the bulk of the combat power in the striking force.... The risks are twofold: First, the static or defending forces usually are insufficient in strength to accomplish the mission alone. Therefore, the success of the mobile defense depends on the successful commitment of the striking force. *Second, the enemy may not be enticed or maneuvered into an area that the defending commander intended and preclude the decisive employment of the striking force.* (Emphasis added)⁵⁹

Unfortunately, the CTAC example provided was so favorable that it did not illustrate the risk involved with the mobile defense. Shown below in summary (Figure 4), the CTAC example does, however, illustrate just how much force the commander can devote to the striking force, or large, mobile reserve.⁶⁰ The friendly corps faces a four-division enemy force (not all shown). That this force ratio in the

CTAC example is so favorable to the defender is one more small bit of evidence that the mobile defense has gone from a force oriented defense to a force destruction oriented defense.

The left frame addresses initial troop dispositions. Note that only one



of the corps' maneuver brigades are devoted to forward defense. The division (-) backstops that brigade in the west, forming the eventual "anvil" for the counterattack "hammer." The armored cavalry regiment (ACR) conducts an economy of force defense in the east, tied to the restrictive terrain. A "true" reserve brigade is in the rear western portion of the corps area, and the striking force of two heavy divisions is in the rear eastern area.

The right frame denotes the mobile defense as it unfolds, with the forward defending brigade conducting a delay to draw in the enemy forces. The ACR holds as shown in the west, and passes the striking force through into the enemy's exposed flank. It is a classic mobile defense, fought in this situation because the

higher commander has directed the friendly corps to destroy the enemy force quickly. Though forces are more than adequate for an area defense, the mobile defense was required for the sake of speed and in order to prevent the enemy force from "bouncing off" the position and interfering with the Army commander's plans elsewhere. It is a force destruction oriented operation.

The CTAC example is among the most ideal possible for the conduct of the mobile defense. One assumption inherent in the mobile defense is that it works best when U.S. forces are opposed against not only an enemy capable of attacking, but of doing so aggressively.⁶¹ In our example, the Krasnovian-style force not only aggressively affects the penetration, but does so with a mere 4:3 ratio.⁶²

There is little to compare this ideal CTAC example to in modern U.S. military history. It is probably impossible to evaluate the doctrinal conduct of the mobile defense in war, as arguably no U.S. commander as ever fought one. What we do have from recent experiences, however, are simulated division and corps mobile defenses from the BCTP Warfighter Exercises (WFX). We now take a brief look at some recent simulations involving the mobile defense.

Fifteen of twenty-one WFXs conducted during the years 1992 and 1993 were examined.⁶³ The six not included were omitted principally for reasons of classification. Of the fifteen exercises considered, three explicitly used the term "mobile defense," and in the fourth it was unambiguously clear that the commander intended a mobile defense. One exercise involved an armored division, two were mechanized infantry divisions, and one was a corps operation.

All three heavy divisions planned for two ground maneuver brigades to defend forward, with a third ground maneuver brigade designated as division reserve, with planned counterattacks into divisional engagement areas. The fourth brigade (aviation) was planned for deep operations in all cases. One division plan

called for a shaped penetration in the center of the division's sector, while the other two plans called for a shaped penetration on a flank. The corps mobile defense plan called for a division to shape a penetration into which the corps "counterattacks" would strike. One corps counterattack was a reserve ground maneuver brigade, the other counterattack was from the aviation brigade.

In none of the four exercises was the defense fought as planned or as a mobile defense according to current doctrine. This has implications for the "flexibility" component of mobile defense. In two of the division defenses the penetration occurred at a point other than planned for and to which the reserve was committed against, and in the third the delaying brigade received such pressure that it eventually passed through the reserve brigade rather than forming an anvil for its counterattack. In the corps exercise, the enemy force was too weak to gain the main battle area. In three of the four operations, the friendly commander was unable to shape or control the penetration. Though no doctrinal mobile defense was fought by the current definition, all the defenses were marginally successful, defined here as accomplishing the immediate mission, but ending the operation poorly disposed for further operations without some reconstitution.

The above four exercises are, in isolation, a statistically insignificant sampling of the mobile defense. However, in practice, they represent virtually everything done over the past two years regarding the mobile defense in the Army's premier large-unit training program. While it is impossible to creditably use these four examples to draw sweeping conclusions about the mobile defense, it is possible to use them for purposes of analysis and in illustration of how the Army thinks about the mobile defense.

Section 4. Analysis of the Contemporary Mobile Defense

This section includes an analysis of the mobile defense using six criteria: (1) relative mobility, (2) risk management, (3) Preparation, (4) Security, (5) Disruption, and (6) Flexibility.⁶⁴ Not surprisingly, the debate turns out to revolve around the last of these criteria, "flexibility," as repeatedly alluded to in the preceding three sections. The other criteria are secondary. Unless stated otherwise, the discussion which follows assumes a division size mobile defense.

Relative Mobility. According to the 1993 FM 100-5, "A mobile defense requires a mobility greater than that of the attacker."⁶⁵ This is a change from the 1986 FM 100-5, which required merely equal mobility.⁶⁶ If by "mobility" the authors are referring to a complex set of factors, all of which must be considered in order to determine "mobility," then no issue is taken, and the rest of this subparagraph is irrelevant. However, if the authors are referring to the relative "speed over ground" which forces can be moved, then both manuals overstate the requirement. On a full dimensional scale of defensive operations, mobility, in the narrower sense, is an important consideration, but not always a determining factor. Both manuals claim too much in making the mobility requirement an absolute.

Trafficability of terrain, early warning, interior versus exterior lines of operations, to name just three of the other important factors, may be equally or more important in determining counterattack (striking force) options. The relative mobility issue is important, but generally only slightly more important than the many other factors involved. The manuals are unnecessarily restrictive, or perhaps, just unclear, in their "mobility imperatives." The ability to move the mobile reserve to the required point within the sector is the requirement, and that ability is a function of several complex factors.

Risk Management. According to the CTAC "Mobile Defense White

Paper," "FM 71-100-1, Division Operations, Tactics and Techniques, states that the mobile defense is a high risk operation because of its fluidity."⁶⁷ The "White Paper" also considers risk,

a critical aspect in a mobile defense because the defending force must retain the bulk of the combat power in the striking force. It should only allocate sufficient forces for defense in order to shape the battlefield. The risks are twofold. First, the static or defending forces usually are insufficient in strength to accomplish the mission alone. Therefore, the success of the mobile defense depends on the successful commitment of the striking force. Second, the enemy may not be enticed or maneuvered into an area that the defending commander intended and preclude the decisive employment of the striking force.⁶⁸

The "White Paper's" second type of risk is an excellent observation that has at least been borne out by recent Warfighter Exercises. The enemy will not necessarily go where the friendly commander intends.

It is precisely for this reason that the first risk is questionable. By successful commitment of the striking force it is understood that CTAC means "as planned." Other contingencies would be dealt with by the "true" reserve. Here the discussion of risk is intertwined with that of the debate surrounding flexibility, and a mobile reserve versus a striking force. The Center for Army Tactics insists that the commander maintain an uncommitted force as the reserve. This reserve force is a distinct unit from the striking force. As the mission depends upon the striking force's successful counterattack, the striking force is committed, and by definition cannot be the reserve. But is this a useful or necessary definition?

The "White Paper" also states a key feature of the reserve is the flexibility that it affords the commander. To insist that the mobile defense always have a striking force and a reserve (or no reserve) is unnecessarily rigid. Already shown, and also put forward by CTAC, is that the enemy may not (probably not according to the limited results provided by WFXs) go where intended. If that is so, why the insistence on separate forces? If the enemy goes where intended, then the striking

force is employed as planned and a reserve is reconstituted upon its commitment (or the commander takes risk with no reserve). If the enemy goes where intended and the counterattack is successful, then mission success is probable.

If the enemy does not go where intended then where will the striking force go? It will, of course, go to the enemy penetration and should in every case be situated to contend with "sub-optimal" penetrations--it functions as a true reserve. To plan a primary counterattack as a true striking force is to do no more than designate for the reserve commander a priority of commitment. Mission success should never, if possible, depend upon a single striking force plan. The commander will desire to shape the battlefield, and will point to a spot on the ground where he desires to kill the enemy, but he would be foolish to hinge success upon that spot. The current FM 100-5 should not, as the "White Paper" recommends, change its language from a "mobile reserve" to a "striking force."⁶⁹

If the mobile defense is more than a favorable force destruction mechanism, and is sometimes used when highly unfavorable force ratios exist, as CTAC also stated, and which is a principal point of this paper, then where will the commander find the forces for both a reserve and a striking force, other than in name? This problem of flexibility prefaces the subparagraph entitled "Flexibility" below and is typical of the problems caused by too narrowly defining the mobile defense.

The actual greatest risk involved within the range of mobile defenses is that there will be multiple successful penetrations by the enemy force, exceeding the reserves' abilities to block or defeat them, much less "destroy." Under these circumstances the mobile defense is a true high risk operation, but not an operation that should exceed the commander's imagination. That defensive operations may occur at this dire end of the spectrum is a recurring theme in this monograph, and

the continuum and our doctrinal thinking should, but currently does not, make room for their possibility.

In summary, the mobile defense as described in these pages occurs over a wide possible range of situations, some desperate, and is not just a counterattack aimed at the attacker as he culminates in front of our defensive positions, as in the new FM 100-5.⁷⁰ Until the mobile defense is viewed in this larger light, it will remain narrowly defined, seldom used by definition, and nondescriptive.

Preparation. While this is difficult to measure objectively, it is useful to discuss the competing interests of the area and mobile defense in terms of preparation. Preparation turns out to be of two kinds: physical and mental. One is required on the battlefield, the other long before reaching the battlefield. While physical preparation may be less important, it is more germane to this discussion.

The mobile defense requires less physical preparation than the area defense. The engineer effort will be intense in both the area and mobile defenses, but less intense along the forward edge of the battle area in the latter, as the delaying force will require its principal work in the final blocking positions which are at some depth within the sector. Engineer effort along the forward trace, as in an area defense, is inherently more intensive with its incumbent security requirements.

In short, a "bulk" of the force, such as the striking force in the mobile defense, will conduct its initial operations passively in rear areas, not remotely requiring the physical preparation of an area defense. *Preparation equals time* in this consideration, so one can conclude that the mobile defense is less time intensive in war, even if it requires more peacetime training to acquire the needed complex unit and leader skills.

Mentally, the mobile defense is the more difficult to prepare in that it involves a greater challenge for the commander as he tries to convey his intent.

The actual execution is more difficult, often involving intricate timing, and a well-trained unit. There are invariably more moving pieces and the required rehearsal effort will be large.

Security. Security requirements for the mobile defense are more difficult for two reasons. First, the mobile defense places a large value on early warning, needing long lead times to prepare the counterattack and confirm the plan. This difficulty is made even more so due to the mobile defense commander's need or desire to take risk in the security area in order to place the bulk of his power in the reserve (striking force).

Second, security involves force protection, and the mobile defense is high risk in terms of both the necessary economies of force required to create the striking force, and in that the principal characteristic of the defense is the counterattack, an operation always fraught with danger.

Disruption. The difference between the area and mobile defenses in terms of the effects of disruption is small. Both rely heavily on the deep battle to separate enemy forces, to interfere with enemy command and control, logistics, and fire support. The mobile defense is slightly more disruptive to the enemy in general due to its less predictable main battle area (MBA) and in its greater ability to conduct counterattacks.

Flexibility. This characteristic, more than any other, distinguishes the mobile from the area defense. It also is the characteristic that is most misunderstood with regard to the mobile defense. We now revisit the "initiative problem" first addressed in section 2.

As was pointed out earlier, the mobile defense came into being when inadequacies were found with a strictly area defense against greater than 3:1 odds. This was the position that the U.S. and her allies found themselves in at the onset

of the Cold War. The mobile defense moved mobile forces off the forward line, away from the likely strike areas for enemy weapons of mass destruction, and into rear areas from which they could be "flexed" against the penetrations that were inevitable due to unfavorable force ratios. The mobile defense was *force oriented*, not necessarily *force destruction oriented*, and certainly not *terrain oriented*. In this single, simple term "force oriented," rather than "force destruction oriented," lies a majority portion of the confusion surrounding the mobile defense.

It was principally a force oriented defense that Hoffman and DeReus described in their Military Review articles. What emerged from the relatively new mobile defense debates found in their articles impacted directly upon the larger conception of defense in general. Central is that the two poles of defense, the area and mobile defenses, are less particular kinds of defenses, as general polar concepts. When the subject--defense--is complex, and there are only two patterns to choose from, the patterns necessarily set up as *polar opposites* and must define every possible particular defense along the resulting continuum. The polar concepts must be right or there will be defensive patterns off the continuum.

The current definition of the mobile defense found in FM 100-5 is not right; it is too particular, stressing "initiative" at the expense of "flexibility." The current mobile defense definition is not the general polar concept at all, but a very favorable type of that concept.

The idea of the friendly commander shaping the penetration in order to seize the initiative could be seen clearly in the 1954 FM 100-5. The problem, however small, was that this idea quickly evolved the mobile defense into a force destruction oriented defense rather than a force oriented defense. Force destruction is a favorable component of force orientation, not the logical extreme position, and

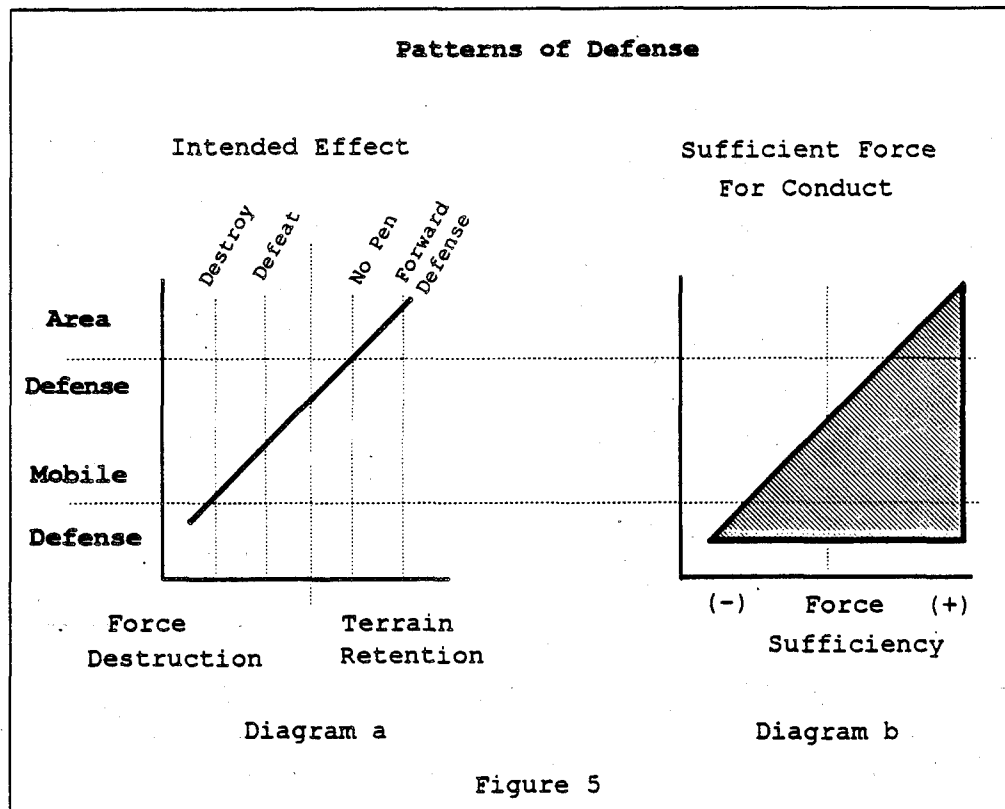
therefore is only a part of the larger piece which diametrically opposes the "terrain orientation" of an area defense.

So what is the problem, and what has it to do with "flexibility"? The problem with the mobile defense as it is currently defined in FM 100-5, is that it does not "define" the defensive continuum. In order to do that it would have to occupy its position opposite the area defense with a more general definition than currently provided by doctrine. The mobile defense is not logically opposed to the much broader concept of the area defense, but rather abbreviates the continuum short of the extreme position. It is a very particular and favorable example of a mobile defense. Off the continuum, outside the present definition of the mobile defense, are those situations in which sufficient forces for an area defense are lacking, and which present the commander with only the possibility of a truly high-risk mobile defense. (Not all mobile defenses are "high risk"--consider the CTAC White Paper example with its defender to attacker force ratio of 3:4.)

The component not considered on the current defensive continuum, is that of force sufficiency. Present doctrine opposes the two defenses on the continuum by force destruction and terrain retention (Figure 5, Diagram a).

This logically sets up the extreme poles of the defensive continuum as the forward defense at one end, and at the other end, true force destruction. Missing entirely is the element of the "broad front defense" that Hoffman wrote of, wherein the driving factor was force available for the assigned sector. This does not mean that the mobile defense is only used when forces are insufficient for an area defense. The mobile defense is a flexible pattern and may be used in all defensive situations except those cases in which a counterattack cannot be used (e.g., when terrain cannot be surrendered and there is no other way to attack an enemy flank or weakness, or when interior lines or friendly mobility are inadequate for

conduct of the counterattack). The mobile defense is theoretically available to the commander more often than the area defense, but that is not to say more often favorable (Figure 5, Diagram b).



In order to properly define the defensive continuum, the determining criteria must take into account not only the commander's intended effect as in current doctrine, but also force sufficiency in relation to the defensive patterns. This includes a broad range of factors generally represented well by the term "available combat power." The resulting continuum accounts for operations ranging from "anvil-like" forward defenses to virtually desperate economy of force defenses facing overwhelming odds. No commander desires to fight the latter, but the defensive theory should account for it, and show the full range of possibilities. Ultimately, Diagrams a. and b., Figure 5, must be overlaid to create the complete defensive continuum. How can we speak commonly and clearly about defensive

patterns otherwise. Pedantry? Perhaps. But those patterns are important enough that General Cevazos insists that every commander's intent statement for a defensive operation contain the precise words "area defense" or "mobile defense."⁷¹

Section 5. Conclusions

The Army's current doctrine defines the mobile defense as a force destruction oriented defense which places the bulk of its force in a mobile reserve which is used to overcome the attacker as he culminates against the friendly defenses, usually accomplished against an exposed flank created by a delay or "controlled penetration." The friendly defending commander thereby seizes the initiative and seeks to pass over to the offense. It is opposed to the terrain-oriented area defense.

Or is it? This paper finds that it is not. The mobile defense, rather, is narrowly defined and is not in logical opposition to the much better understood area defense. The current definition is of a very particular and favorable example of the mobile defense, and not the general pattern itself. As a result a range of possible defenses, especially in a force projection army when initial defending forces might be sparse, are left off the defensive continuum.

The mobile defense has an *unfavorable*, as well as favorable, quality to it because it is the pattern used when "forces are insufficient to adequately defend using an area defense."⁷² This is not the sum definition of the mobile defense except at its bleakest extreme. It is a part of the definition that must be included and considered by military professionals for the sake of completeness.

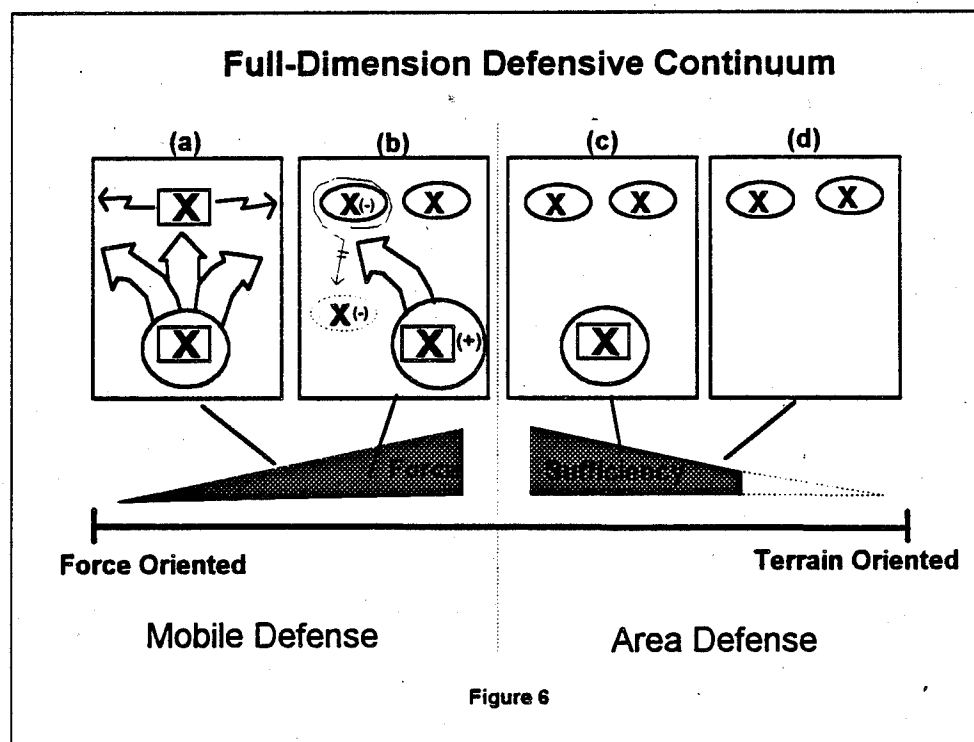
The pattern of defense should not be theoretically determined merely by the commander's intent, such as in force destruction or terrain retention, but also by what is possible. In short, the defensive continuum should consider force

sufficiency as well as the commander's intent in defining the patterns of defense. Force sufficiency is a function of friendly combat power in relation to frontage and enemy combat power. To date, the failure to do so has been due to a misunderstanding of the full range of the mobile defense.

The following mobile defense definition proposes less restrictive wording, and will allow an expansion of the proposed full-dimension defensive continuum that follows.

The mobile defense is a force-oriented defense characterized by a large mobile reserve, used in varying combinations of defensive, offensive and retrograde operations designed to give that reserve maximal effect. The commander uses the mobile defense across a wide range of defensive situations, extending from violent counterattacks bent on destroying the enemy force, to highly flexible economy of force operations when a delay is not possible or desired. The commander freely trades terrain as required for combat effect.

The continuum, then, in Figure Six combines the two diagrams from Figure Five.



The left half of the continuum now allows for the fuller definition of the mobile defense. It changes the left extreme pole of the continuum from a force destruction oriented pole to a force oriented pole, and recognizes the element of force sufficiency as well as commander's intent (see Figure 5, Diagram a), represented by the two triangles.⁷³ The missing piece (the outlined portion) of the right force sufficiency triangle represents that portion of the spectrum where an area defense cannot be established. Adequate forces are not available to create mutually supporting defensive positions. Within this range of available forces the commander must turn to the mobile defense.

Finally, the four force schematics at the top of the continuum represent not only the possibilities along the continuum, but also that no one schematic fully explains a pattern of defense. The old continuum would have been represented by schematics (b) and (c), and would have accounted for (d), but not for the added schematic (a), the most flexible, and often least favorable defensive approach. It is this schematic that is particularly not accounted for in FM 100-5. Nevertheless, it is a viable option and one a commander may need in the future, especially in the early stages of a force projection deployment.

The mobile defense is not an esoteric defense that our Army is incapable of understanding. It is a viable and powerful pattern of defense. Originally, it entered our doctrine as a means of defending against the Soviets in Europe, but now takes on new meaning as we plan for a force-projection versus forward-deployed Army.

The mobile defense has undergone changes in, and turbulence with, its definition since it first appeared in Army doctrine after World War II. The principal problem can best be characterized as one of balancing the concepts of initiative with flexibility. In truth, it has been a false dichotomy. The mobile defense's

definition should now be re-expanded within the context of Full-Dimension Operations to embrace its original characteristics, which would include both the mobile defense as presently in FM 100-5, but also a defense prepared to face highly unfavorable odds often exceeding the doctrinal 1:3 force ratio.⁷⁴ The mobile defense should be a flexible defense to be used by the commander in dire as well as favorable circumstances.

Endnotes

¹U.S. Army, FM 100-5, Operations, (Ft Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, June 1993), 9-2.

²Ibid., 9-2--9-3.

³I served as the maneuver plans officer for Prairie Warrior (May 93). General Cevazos made this comment during one of his frequent stops in the corps plans cell.

⁴As the reader will see, other sources were considered and used, but FM 100-5 and Military Review contained such a preponderance of the information that their review became the heart of the methodology.

⁵FM 100-5, 9-0.

⁶War Department, FM 100-5, Field Service Regulation, Operations, (Washington D.C.: June 1944), 159.

⁷Ibid., 164.

⁸Ibid., 169.

⁹Ibid., 183.

¹⁰Kevin Ronald Soutor, "Mobile Defense: The German Influence on American Operational Defense Doctrine, 1944-1954," unpublished thesis (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska), Dec 1992, 19.

¹¹Ibid., 2.

¹²U.S. Army, FM 100-5, Operations, (Washington D.C.: August 1949), 120.

¹³Ibid., 140.

¹⁴Ibid., 141.

¹⁵Ibid., 140.

¹⁶Major Robert J. Hoffman, "Mobile Defense," Military Review, (May 1951), 47-56.

¹⁷Ibid., 47.

¹⁸U.S. Army, "Mobile Defense," position paper from the Infantry School Commandant to the Commandant of CGSC (Ft Benning, GA: 1 Sep 94) 1.

¹⁹Hoffman, 47.

²⁰The great discriminator, in the discussion at this point, between choosing an area or mobile defense, is not the current choice between force destruction and terrain retention, but between options available due to force sufficiency. This difference strikes at the heart of the monograph and will be further addressed later in the paper.

²¹Hoffman, 53: "The force that the commander holds in reserve depends, first, upon his estimate of the strength required to defeat an enemy penetration and, second, on the minimum forces required to defend the critical terrain features."

²²Ibid., 54.

²³The 1949 FM 100-5 had not included the "defense of a wide front" as a type of defense, but rather a defensive situation to be considered, along with "defense against an airborne attack," and "defense against a mechanized forces."

²⁴U.S. Army, FM 100-5, Operations, (Washington, D.C.: September 1954), 117.

²⁵U.S. Army, FM 100-5, Operations, (Washington, D.C.: February 1962), 75.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid. Initiative and flexibility are not, of course, mutually exclusive terms. But in the evolution of the mobile defense there is a real tension between them because as the mobile defense was designed to respond to a large ground attack, and not being certain of the exact penetration point, needed a means to shift adequate forces to meet the penetration(s). One might argue, "isn't that displaying initiative of a kind?" Yes, but not the kind addressed here. The initiative referred to in this "tension" is that which refuses to account for an enemy penetration anywhere along the line, and insists, with one eye closed to reality, that the defender achieves "initiative" by bending the enemy commander to his will, "determining" the time and place of that penetration. This is commonly referred to as "shaping the battlefield." The mobile defense in its most favorable forms (read sufficient forces available) will certainly shape the battlefield. In its lesser, and perhaps more common forms (read insufficient forces), it will attempt to shape the battlefield but plans multiple counterattacks for both multiple possible penetration points, and multiple penetrations.

²⁸FM 100-5, Operations, (1962), 75.

²⁹While this will remind some readers of the active defense, it is really different in some important ways. The mobile defense was more realistic in that it allowed for a penetration and then planned to take advantage of the enemy flanks that were exposed by the penetration. The active defense planned on identifying the enemy main effort before it struck the MBA, and then repositioning adequate forces to be set before the enemy's arrival. More on this follows in this section.

³⁰This and the quotation earlier in the paragraph: Lieutenant Colonel Clarence C. DeReus, "The Defense of Tomorrow?", Military Review (Ft Leavenworth, KS: September 1954), 8.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Clinton E. Granger, "A Philosophy of Defense," Military Review (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: October 1962).

³⁴Ibid., 70.

³⁵Compare Granger's blurred offensive and defensive to Hoffman's "defensive-offensive action." See Hoffman quotation on page 8.

³⁶Ibid., 71-72.

³⁷Ibid., 72.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Robert E. Wagner, "Active Defense and All That," Military Review, (Fort Leavenworth, KS.: August 1980), 5.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹See Chapter Two of the 1976 FM 100-5; it is devoted to table after table of explanation as to the lethality of modern weapons and probability of kill statistics. In other words, it addressed the technical basis for saying "this is enough force to defend forward in Germany."

⁴²Wagner, 5.

⁴³The favorable form of the mobile defense is precisely like the trap play in football. In football, a guard or tackle blocks left or right, away from his portion of the line, to allow the directly opposing lineman to penetrate. A guard or tackle from the other side of the line then "pulls" from his position and delivers a full running block

to the penetrating player from a "blind" side as he comes through the line. Not surprisingly, it is the offense that runs a trap play.

⁴⁴The term "mobile area defense" is used ironically to characterize how the active defense attempted to be the defense for all occasions. The term is not used elsewhere to the author's knowledge.

⁴⁵U.S. Army, FM 100-5, Operations, (Washington, D.C.: August 1982).

⁴⁶Ibid., 11-9.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸U.S. Army, FM 100-5, Operations, (Washington, D.C.: May 1986), 134/136.

⁴⁹Ibid., 135.

⁵⁰An example of the mobile defense's economy of force aspect follows in the CTAC "Mobile Defense White Paper" discussion.

⁵¹The reader can review the definition on page 1 of this monograph.

⁵²Compare required relative mobility between the 1993 FM 100-5, 9-2; and the 1986 FM 100-5, 135.

⁵³U.S. Army, "Mobile Defense White Paper," (Draft), (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: 18 October 1993), Executive Summary. The date given in this footnote is a date of presentation to MG (P) Funk; it was the only date on the White Paper. As of this writing the White Paper had not been approved by the TRADOC commander. The Executive Summary is a one page preface to the White Paper.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., 6.

⁵⁶Ibid..

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., 7.

⁵⁹Ibid., 10.

⁶⁰Figure 4 is an abbreviated version of the four diagrams found in the White Paper, 11-12.

⁶¹FM 100-5, Operations (1993), 9-2. "The defenders cause the natural aggressiveness of the defenders to focus on the wrong objective...."

⁶²The Krasnovians are a fictitious enemy used in the TRADOC common teaching scenarios. They are organized like, and fight exactly as did, forces from the former Soviet Union.

⁶³In agreement with the Battle Command Training Program and Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), no direct references are made to the WFX Final Evaluation Reviews, or to the designations of units participating in those exercises. The FERs are examined to consider divisional and corps planning and the results obtained during the simulation. Caution must be used with any tactical *lessons learned*.

⁶⁴ The first criterion, relative mobility, comes from the past two FM 100-5s which disagree on how much relative mobility is required. The second criterion, risk management, is taken from the CTAC White Paper which describes the mobile defense as an inherently high-risk operation. The final four criteria are the four characteristics of the defense from the current FM 100-5.

⁶⁵FM 100-5, Operations, 1993, 9-2.

⁶⁶FM 100-5, Operations, 1986, 135.

⁶⁷CTAC White Paper, 9.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁹The current FM 100-5 muddies the waters by using both terms on page 9-2. The striking force should be the force that conducts a planned counterattack against a controlled penetration. It will usually be the reserve.

⁷⁰FM 100-5, Operations, (1993), right-hand column, 2nd paragraph.

⁷¹As addressed to the Corps staff during Prairie Warrior '93.

⁷²CTAC White Paper, 7.

⁷³The commander's "intent" is either terrain or force oriented.

⁷⁴"Full-Dimension Operations" is the term used to describe the new FM 100-5 doctrine. It is no different than Airland Battle at the mid- and high-intensity ends of conflict.

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